

Hobbies

On ancient Roman coins and dogs chewing up \$5 bills

By Roger Boye

More questions about coins and currency are answered this week.

Q—Is it possible to buy a coin from ancient Rome without paying a small fortune? C.R., Evanston

A—Yes. Many Roman coins—especially copper specimens—sell for \$10 or less. Check with a coin shop that specializes in such items.

Ancient-coin prices are governed by the law of supply and demand. Excavators have unearthed large quantities of certain types of ancients, which help to keep prices down.

Q—Our dog chewed her way

through a wad of 22 \$5 bills, turning the money into regurgitated confetti. Is there any way to get our money back? P.K., Chicago

A—Send what's left and a letter describing what happened to the Office of Currency Standards, Room 344, Bureau of Engraving and Printing, P.O. Box 37048, Washington, D.C. 20013. Normally, OCS examiners will make an exchange if they can identify at least half of each original note, although exceptions will be made if they are satisfied that large missing portions have been destroyed.

Q—Is Confederate money valuable? We have two \$5 bills and

several copper pennies. T.O., Wheaton

A—The Confederate States of America issued millions of paper notes in several denominations and varieties. Many of the bills retail today in the \$2 to \$10 range, depending on bill type, condition, design and other factors. Also, you should have an expert examine your items to make certain they're authentic because many worthless fakes are known to exist.

Your coins probably are common restrikes or worthless imitations. In 1861, a Philadelphia engraver made 12 one-cent coins for the Confederacy but hid them in his basement because he feared arrest by Union troops. In 1874, another Philadelphia man supposedly struck about 75 Confederate cents using the two wartime dies. Today, the original 12 coins sell for as much as \$20,000 each, and even the so-called "first restrikes" go for \$3,000 and up.